

**Regarding: HB 6517**

**To Whom It May Concern:**

**My name is Jennifer Spirito, I live in Bristol, Connecticut. I fully support HB 6517.**

**I ask that you please support HB 6517. AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE TO ANALYZE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LAWS GOVERNING DYSLEXIA INSTRUCTION AND TRAINING.**

**My family has 2 stories related to dyslexia.**

**Both of my children, Frankie 16 y/o and Rocco 13 y/o, have been diagnosed with severe dyslexia. The academic road for them has been challenging.**

**Frankie: Part 1**

**We recognized something was different with my oldest son beginning in pre-school. He struggled with letters and sounds. He was not grasping CVC words. We entered kindergarten seeking help in understanding what we were noticing. We secured him extra tutoring in the summer out of our own pocket. We were told to wait and see how he progresses. He became involved in Special Education Services in elementary school. We were attending PPT meetings at least yearly and extra literacy support was being offered. I was trusting of the school district to do everything in their power to help support my child and fulfill his potential. He was not making progress.**

**Rocco:**

**My 13 y/o presented with many of the same concerns as Frankie. He also became involved in Special Education Services in elementary school. We attended PPT meetings with the school to address his IEP and implement extra supports and interventions. By 4<sup>th</sup> grade I knew he was not making progress. I did not feel the district was offering the type of support he needed. I asked and did receive an independent evaluation by a neuropsychologist who identified he was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade**

reading at a pre-kindergarten level. This was unacceptable to me as the interventions provided were not research based and clearly were not helping him. I did not feel the school had my son's best interest in mind and we asked an advocate to help us. This made all the difference in requesting and receiving support. The district did not have trained teachers who could offer research based interventions with fidelity. After 1 full year of meetings and many years of evidence that I gathered on his testing and lack of progress the district agreed to outplace him. He is now on year 4 of his outplacement and making gains. Before transferring to the specialized school his self esteem was beginning to see the effects of his reading challenges. He was identifying the differences in himself and his friends and believing there was something wrong with him. At his current school, he is aware of his learning differences and feels the teachers are able to teach him in ways that make sense.

#### **Frankie: Part 2**

During Rocco's first year at the specialized school, I began to focus on Frankie and his lack of progress. He also had a full neuropsych eval, at my request, and was identified as reading at a kindergarten level while he was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. This was unacceptable to me. With the knowledge I had from advocating for Rocco, I began to ask for research based support by having him attend the same school as Rocco. There was such a significant deficit we had no time to waste. After 1 full year of meetings and strongly advocating for his best interest he was offered the support he so desperately needed. He is now on his 3rd year at the specialized school and making progress.

The emotional impact involved in advocating for my child was significant. It was a heartbreaking to think our school was holding out on services. Many tears were shed after meetings and many sleepless nights were spent brainstorming on what I should do differently. It was disheartening to have grown up in this school district myself and know that I had a good experience because I was the average learner while I watched my children struggle daily.

Why did both of these children take so long to have their needs met? Why did I, the parent, have to come up with the literacy solution and

**plan? I am not the expert. The higher education institutions and local districts are the experts and need to be held accountable. Give teachers the resources they want to teach literacy with fidelity and research based methods. Give children in every Connecticut community a chance because reading is a fundamental need for survival in the world.**

**I ask that you please support HB 6517. AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE TO ANALYZE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LAWS GOVERNING DYSLEXIA INSTRUCTION AND TRAINING.**

**Thankyou for your time.**

**Sincerely,**

**Jennifer Spirito  
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Bristol, CT 06010**